

THE  
ARROGANCY  
OF  
REASON

AGAINST  
Divine Revelations;  
Repressed.

OR,  
Proud Ignorance the cause  
of Infidelity, and of Mens  
Quarrelling with  
The Word of God.

*by Richard Baxter*

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Rom. 11. 33, 34.

**O** The depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his Ways past finding out! For who hath known the minde of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?

Rom. 9. 20.

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Job 37: 23.

Touching the Almighty, we cannot finde him out, He is excellent in Power, and in Judgment, and in plenty of Justice.

Job 40. 8.

Wilt thou also disannul my judgments, wilt thou condemn me, that thou maist be righteous?

Psal. 73. 16, 17.

When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the Sanctuary of God, then I understood their end.

Job 42. 2, 3.

I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no

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thought

thought can be with-holden from thee: Who is he that  
hideth counsel without knowledge; therefore have I  
uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for  
me which I knew not.

1 Cor. 3. 18, 19.

Let no man deceive himself; if any man among  
you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a  
fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this  
world is foolishness with God.

1 Cor. 1. 25:

The foolishness of God is wiser then men, and the  
weakness of God is stronger then men.

Read Isai. 40. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

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THE  
**Arrogancy of R E A S O N**  
 against *Divine Relations,*  
 Repressed.

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J O H N 3. 9.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him;  
*How can these things be?*

**I**N the beginning of this Chapter you have a Lecture read by the Great Teacher of the Church, to a Scholar that was newly entring into his School He is yet but a *Catechumenus* in preparation to be a *Christian*, rather than *one* indeed; having good thoughts of Christ, but not believing in him as the *Messiah*, nor engaged by Baptism to be one of his Disciples: And accordingly doth Christ suit his Doctrine to his condition, and teach him first the great Principle of Christianity. What success it had at first, we finde in the Text, but not what

what was the issue at last : Though by other Texts we may probably conjecture.

First, The Schollar is by name, *Nicodemus* ; by Sect, a Pharisee ; by place, a Ruler of the Jews, or one of their great Council. For the frame of his minde, the degree of his preparatory knowledge or belief, you may discern it ; 1. By the season of his coming ; 2. By the motive that prevailed with him to come ; And 3. by the confession that he makes of his belief. From all which you may see, first, that he believed that there was a God, and that it belonged to God to teach mankind ; and that it was his way to teach by men ; and that it was mans duty to seek after Gods teaching from his Messengers, and come to them and request it ; and that who ever could give sufficient evidence of his Mission from God, should be heard by men ; and that Jesus Christ did truly and undoubtedly work Miracles ; and that such Miracles as Christ wrought, were an undoubted proof, that God was with him. All these things it is apparent he did believe by these words, Vers. 2. [*Rabbi we know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.*]

Secondly, From hence also you see, that it was the evidence of Christs Miracles, that had thus far convinced him, and drove him to Christ, as a Teacher come from God, and consequently one that was to be credited : But that he was the Messiah, here is yet no confession.

Thirdly, And as his belief was but preparatory, so this change upon his heart doth appear to be

no better: For he hath yet learned the lesson of Self-denial, and preferring the known truth and duty (of seeking after the minde of God from his Messengers) before the credit of the world, or his life; and therefore he comes to Jesus but by night, as being afraid to own him in the face of his enemies.

Yet doth not Christ cast this cowardize in his teeth to his discouragement, but fitteth his medicine to the strength of the Patient, as well as to the disease: For there was more malice and raging zeal against the truth, among the Jews, then among the Gentiles; and so more dangers and sufferings, which a novice might not be so fit to encounter with. And therefore *Paul* when he went up to *Jerusalem*, did Preach the Gospel privately to them of worldly reputation, which among the Gentiles, and inferior Jews, he preacheth publicly; lest through the prevalency of mens pride or cowardize, his physick should not do its work, but he should run or labor in vain, *Gal.* 2: 2.

The first and great thing that Christ presently falls upon, is to let this man know, that this much will not serve his turn (to confels the Miracles, and so the Divine Mission of Christ;) but that he must also truly believe the office that he is sent upon, even to be the Messiah, the Mediator; and the Redeemer of the World, and must openly be engaged to him as such a one by Baptism, and so own him and confels him before the World, and receive his renewing Spirit, for the illumination of his understanding, the purifying and quicken-

ing of his heart, and chereforming, and after-guidance of his life.

This work Christ calleth by the name of the New-Birth or Regeneration, and tells *Nicodemus*, [*That except he be born again of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*] Not that there is the same necessity of the washing by water, and the purifying by the Spirit. For by [*water*] is principally meant that Covenant which Baptism did sign; even the confession of Christ, and dedication to him in the relation of redeemed Ones, Children, Disciples, and Subjects, on our part; and his re-engagement and relation to us: Yet [*water*] it self is the thing nearly signified in the Word, and the use of it is of Divine appointment, and not to be neglected where it may be used; but the necessity to Salvation is placed in the relation or thing signified. As its common to say to a Souldier of the enemies, [*If thou wilt change thy General, and take the Princes Colours and fight for him, thou maist have pardon for thy rebellion.*] Where [*taking Colours*] is a duty; but the necessity is placed in the change of his relation and practice; for if there were no Colours at hand to give him, yet if he be listed as a Soldier (or if not listed, yet if by open profession and action, joyned to them) it will be accepted; or else as *Grotius* expoundeth it, by [*Water and the Spirit*] is meant, a washing, cleansing Spirit; of which, see him in *Loc.*

This change that is here called the [*New birth*] is not the new Creation of a substance, or destruction of our former substance, or faculties: For

we



we have still the same natural powers of understanding and willing; But it is the change of the Disposition, Habits, and Acts of those faculties: And (with submission to the contrary minded, I conceive that) it is not onely our real qualitative change that is here called *the New-birth*; but that the word is more comprehensive (as I before exprest) including our new relation to God in Christ, as Sons and Disciples to Christ, and Servants, Subjects, or Soldiers under him; with a removal from our former relations which we were in by corruption, and are inconsistent with these: So that it comprehendeth both our new relations to God, to the Redeemer, and to his Church; where we have a new Father, Husband, Lord, and Fellow-servants; new Brothers, and Sisters, and Inheritance (though yet we renounce not our Natural Brethren, Parents, and Inheritance, as the Popish Monastical Votaries conceive, any further then as they are contrary to the Interest of Christ.)

The Reasons that perswade me to take Regeneration in this extent, are,

First, Because it is the entrance into our whole New State that is here so called, without any limiting expression.

Secondly, Because we are said to be born of [*Water*] as well as the Spirit: And certainly Baptism doth as nearly and truly signifie our Justification, and Relative Change, and new Covenant Engagements, and Adoption, and Church Membership, as it doth our Qualitative Renovation. Nor do I see how any fair Exposition can be given  
of.

of that saying [*Except a man be born of Water*] which shall not include the change of our relations, as well as of our dispositions. And the like I may say of other Texts, which mention Regeneration, which I will not now so far digress as to recite.

Having seen what Christ teacheth *Nicodemus* first, let us next see the success of his doctrine. *Nicodemus* fastening too much upon the Metaphorical term of being [*born again.*] and withal not understanding the meaning of it, nor the scope of Christ, he presently expresseth his ignorance and unbelief by this question, [*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mothers womb, and be born?*] Hereupon Christ returning an Explicatory Answer, telling him not onely the nature of the *new birth*, but also the mysteriousness of its causes in the effecting of it, and shewing a plain reason from Natural Agents, Why the mysteriousness of this should not make it seem incredible; yet doth *Nicodemus* return a second Answer like the first [*How can these things be?*] Which words do import not an absolute unbelief of the truth of what Christ had said, but a great ignorance of his meaning, and a not discerning of that evidence fully, which should have caused full belief; but a strong apprehension of the improbability of the thing affirmed, and thereupon a great doubting of the truth of the affirmation.

And note here the aggravations of *Nicodemus* his fault, first, They were the words of one that he himself confessed to be a teacher come from God,

God, and that sealed his Doctrine by such Miracles as none could do, except God were with him. And doth God send any Messenger with a lie? or any Teacher that knoweth not what he teacheth? or will he seal untruths, or senseless absurdities, with such unquestionable miracles? Sure a man that was once convinced, that God sent the Messenger, and sealed the message, should be confident, that the matter of it is divine, and should never once suspect it of untruth!

Secondly, Though Christ did with frequent asseverations, aver the truth of his Doctrine, yet did *Nicodemus* stagger through unbelief.

Thirdly, It was the very Catechism and Rudiments of Piety, and Christianity which was so strange to him.

Fourthly, The term by which Christ expresseth *Spiritual things*, he understandeth all in a carnal sense; yea, and after that Christ had told him plainly what birth he means, not carnal, producing a fleshly Creature, but of Water and the Spirit, producing a Spiritual Creature, yet doth not *Nicodemus* understand him for all this.

Fifthly, Yet was this man a Ruler of the Jews, even one of the great Sanedrim, and one reputed skilful in the Law; one that professed himself a guide of the blinde, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of Babes, which had the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the Law; one of those that boasted of God, and of the Law, *Rom. 2. 17, 18, 19, 20.* Yet he that should teach others, had not learnt these Rudiments himself.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, And when Christ used a familiar instance, to shew him that things are not therefore incredible, because invisible, or because we know not the nature, cause, and end of them. We may know *that it is*, when we cannot know *what is it*, or *whence*, or *why* it is, or *whether* it tends, as in the blowing of the wind is evident; yet doth not Nicodemus cease his doubting, on this account, but asketh, [*How can these things be?*] the spirituality, and mysteriousness of the thing, made it seem improbable to his uninformed intellect; and the seeming improbability made him doubt of the verity. Because it was past his apprehension to conceive, *how* it should be, therefore he doubted, whether it were true, or not: He had not so much rational consciousness of his own ignorance, or so much confidence in a Teacher sent from God, and sealing his Doctrine by Miracles, as to acquiesce as a Learner in his Teachers credit, concerning the verity of the thing, while he was seeking to get a clearer discovery of its nature, rise, and ends.

So that here were all these sins together manifested in this answer, Great ignorance, even in a Ruler, unbelief, doubting of the conclusion, when he had acknowledged the premises; an unteachableness (in part) when he professed himself to come to learn; an arrogant conceit of the consciousness of his understanding, as if Christs words, or the plain truth should be sooner suspected, then his shallow capacity.

From this Picture we may well conclude what is the ordinary shape of mans corrupted disposition;

sition ; and we may all know our selves by knowing *Nicodemus*. And from hence I may raise this Observation of us all.

*Doct. The corrupt nature of man is more prone to question the truth of Gods Word, then to see and confess their own ignorance and incapacity ; and ready to doubt, whether the things that Christ revealeth are true, when they themselves do not know the nature, cause, and reason of them.*

They will make every thing which they understand not, to seem improbable ; and all such improbabilities will make it seem incredible ; and the incredibility of a part, makes the whole seem incredible : And thus men will be Infidels, or seed their infidelity by everything that themselves are ignorant of ; and make it the chief reason why they will not believe or learn, because they do not already know, and fully understand the things to be learnt and believed. And so God must be accused in every thing that Moles and Worms are ignorant of.

When the Jews acknowledged the Prophets to be of God, and sometime would profess to receive and obey any message that God should send by them ; yet when they heard what it was in particular which he sent, then if it did not suit with their interest and carnal Reason, they would not believe it, or obey it, but rather persecute the Messenger, and think that, sure such a message could never come from God. So that they must  
like

like the particular matter, before they would believe that it was of God. And so Gods Word shall not be Gods Word, unless it please the blinde and carnal Reason of man.

So you may finde they used the Prophet *Jere-my*, *Jere. 42.* They intreat the Prophet to go for them to God, by prayer, and for advice, and binde themselves with seeming resolution to obey. saying, [*The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things, for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us: Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey, &c.*] One would have thought that these men would have believed, and obeyed any thing that God should send to them, after such a vow as this: And yet when they heard that the message was contrary to their own mindes and opinions, Chap. 43: 1, 2. its said, That [*all the proud men*] gave this answer [*Thou speakest falsely, the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say this.*]

A full instance you have of the like corrupt disposition, in *John 6.* When Christ doth but tell them that he is the Bread that came down from Heaven, the Jews murmur, Vers. 41: But when he insisted on it, that [*He was the Living-Bread, and that he would give his Flesh for the life of the World, and that he that eateth him, should live for ever.*] These Spiritual things they did not understand, but understood him carnally; and thereupon reject the truth, because they understood it not. So that Vers. 52. they fall a striving among them-



themselves against Christs words, saying, [*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*] Even like *Nicodemus* [*How can these things be?*] they will not believe it is true, or that it can be, till they know themselves, *How it can be?* And when Christ yet pressed home the same mystery further, even some of his own [*Disciples when they heard this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it.*] Vers. 60. And though Christ proceed to open the mystery to them, and speak that more plainly which he had spoken Allegorically; yet its said, Vers. 66. That [*From that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him;*] insomuch, as he asketh the twelve, whether they would go also? intimating the greatness of the number of revolvers, upon this slight occasion; forsooth, because he spake that which they understood not, and would have taught them what they had not, humility and patience enough to learn; and because they did not reach it at the first hearing, therefore they thought it improbable and incredible. Many more such instances we might give you from Scripture, but alas, it is a truth that needs no further proof; there are as many living witnesses of it, as there are men on earth; the unregenerate being conquered by this corruption, and the regenerate weakned, and hindered much by the remnants of it:

For the further improvement of this Observation, I shall, first, open further the nature and workings of this corruption; secondly, and then shew

show the Reasons of it ; and lastly, make some Application of all.

1. Sometime the weak intellect of man, is stalled at the quiddity or nature of things ; and then being arrogant, as well as ignorant, it will not believe that there is such a thing, because he cannot reach to know what it is.

On this account some question, whether man have an Immortal Soul, because they cannot reach to know (as they expect) what that Soul is. And some will not believe, that there is such a thing as the Spirit of God dwelling in his people, because they know not what that Spirit is : And some think that there is no such thing as inherent sanctifying Grace, or the Image of God renewed upon the Souls of the regenerate ; but that all talk of these Spiritual supernatural changes, are meer fancies and conceits ; and all, because they know not what this sanctity and gracious inclination is. They think there is no such thing as Communion with God, because they know not *what it is* ; nor any such thing as a Spirit of Prayer, because they know not *what it is*.

And indeed, if this were a wise and right reasoning, then there should be nothing in Being, but what we know the formal nature of ; which is as gross a conceit, as most in the World. What if you know not what an Angel or Spirit is ? doth it follow that there is none ? What if you know not what is beyond the visible Creatures out of sight ? doth it follow, that there is nothing beyond our sight ? By this Rule, you may say, that there is no God ; nay, all the World must needs say

say so, if this were right reasoning; for no man hath a true formal knowledge of Gods Essence; and therefore must say, there is no God, because they know not *what God is*: Nay, its a great question, Whether such men must not deny the Being of almost all Gods Creation. For it is but little that we know of the forms of things, in comparison of what we are ignorant of. You know not what the fire is, nor what the light is, nor what the air and wind is; for all the great pretences of the world, men are ignorant of the formal nature of these. And will you therefore say, that there is no such thing as fire, or light, or air or wind? You know not the formal nature of the Sun or Moon; is there therefore no Sun or Moon. Alas, there is not a pile of grass, nor the smallest creeping thing, that you thoroughly know, and yet you know that such things there are. A Beast knows not what a Man is, and yet he apprehendeth that there is such a Creature: And no man thoroughly knoweth what he is himself, and yet he knoweth that he is.

And for the Soul it self, it is a most rare and obvious truth, that we have such a Soul; but it is not so easie to give a definition of it. As the way to know that you have eyes in your head, and eye-sight, is not by seeing those eyes or eye-sight; but by seeing other things by them. For the eye was not made to see it self, nor do we see the sight of the eye; but by that eye and sight we see other things, and thereby know that we have eyes and sight: For he that hath not eyes and eye-sight, can see nothing at all; so the intellectuall Soul was

not made directly to understand it self, and its own intellaction; but to understand other things, and thereby to know that we have an intellectual Soul. For he that understandeth, doth understand something, and thereby he understandeth that he doth understand, and so, that he hath an intellectual faculty: For he that hath not an intellectual Soul, can understand nothing at all; (yet I will not presume to determine the controversy, Whether the Intellect do know its own, and the Will elicitly, by direct intuition of the act it self.) Is as unreasonable a thing then, to doubt whether we have such intellectual Souls, because they know not themselves directly or fully; as long as they know other things, as it is to doubt, whether we have eyes, because they see not themselves, as long as they see external Objects.

Moreover, this corruption doth often discover it self, in that men will not believe the truth of the thing revealed, because they cannot reach to understand the *causes* of it: so many will question Gods decrees of Predestination and Perdition, because they cannot reach the *causes*. And they will deny the very work of Creation, because they cannot know the way of Creation. They will question, whether they have immortal Souls; because they cannot tell, how they are caused; whether by seminal reproduction and propagation, or by immediate Creation? They deny the work of Gods differencing effect of Grace, because they know not how it is given, or wrought in the Soul.

And as well might they deny, that they have flesh or bones, till they better know how they were caused in the Womb: And they may as well deny, that they have any blood in their bodies, any nutrition or augmentation, till they better know the mystery of Sanguification, and other nutritive works: And as well may they say, That the Sun doth not shine, or warm us, till they know how it is that these are caused by the Sun. They know not how the Plants are animated, and specified, nor how they suck their nutriment from the Earth, and yet they know that such things are: They know not how the silly Snail doth form her Shell, or Nature for her; nor how the Feathers of the Peacock are so beautified; and the several sorts of Birds, Beasts, Plants, Fruits, are so diversified and adorned; and yet they know that such things are: Or as Christ telleth Nicodemus here, [*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and you hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh &c.*] And do we therefore say, That there is no wind, because we know not whence it cometh, or what is the inferior cause of it? Will you say, That the Sea doth not ebbe and flow, or there are no Earthquake, Thunder, and Lightning, because men do so litle know the causes of them. *Felix qui potuit &c.* It is not every mans lot to reach such causes; nor any mans on Earth to know the causes of all things which he knoweth to be; nor fully the causes of any one.

3. Moreover, This folly of mans heart doth discover it self thus: In, that men will not believe the truths revealed by God, because they

cannot see Gods Ends and Reasons, and the use of the things. Many an evident Truth is rejected by the proud wit of foolish man, because God hath not told them why he hath so determined and ordered the business; or if he have told it, yet they understand it not: So many Infidels and Socinians do deny Christs Satisfaction as a Ransom, and Sacrifice for sin, because they cannot see any reason for it, or necessity of it: They cannot see, but God may pardon sin without satisfaction. And then, what need of all this ado? or, what likelihood, that God would lay so much on his Son, or make so great a business of this work, for our good, and his glory, if all was needless? And thus many deny the Universal extent of his satisfaction, as being for all mankind, because they are not able to see the reason and use of it. They thrust in their dead *quarsum* as a sufficient answer to the most express words of God: And ask, what good will it do men to be ransomed, and not saved? They fear not to say, That this is a thing unbecoming God, and such a weakness, as men would not be guilty of: So that if we can prove that such a thing there is, they will not fear to charge it on God as his unreasonable weakness. The like we might shew in many other points.

And must God unlock to us the Reasons, Ends and Uses, of his Truths and Works, before we will believe that such things are? We will allow Parents to conceal the Reasons and Ends of many precepts from their Children; and a Prince to conceal the Reasons of many Laws, and to kee-



to himself the *Arca* *Imperii*, the mysteries of State : and must God open all before he can be believed ? Is not the Wisdom, and the Will of God, the most satisfying Reason in the World ? Must you have proper Reasonings and Intentions in God ? or will you have a cause of the first cause, or an end of the ultimate end of all ? Alas, how little do the wisest men know of the use and ends of many a Creature, over their heads, and under their feet, which their eyes behold ? yea, how little know they of the use and ends of many a part of their own bodies ? And yet they know that such things there are.

What abundance of *why's* hath an Arrogant Infidel, upon the reading of Scripture, from the beginning of *Genesis* to the end of the *Revelation*, which must all be satisfied before he will believe. Of all which, God will one day satisfy them ; but not in the manner as they would have prescribed him.

Another expression of this Arrogant Ignorance, is, When men will not believe the several truths of God, because they are not able to reconcile them, and place each one in its own order, and see the Method and Body of Truth in its true Location and Proportion : Nay, perhaps they will believe none, because they cannot discern the harmony.

What abundance of seeming contradictions in Scripture do rise up in the eyes of an Ignorant Infidel ? as strange apparitions do to a distracted man ; or as many colours do before the inflamed or distempered

distempered eye. These self-conceited ignorant Souls, do imagine all to be impossible which exceedeth their knowledge; and because they cannot see the sweet consent of Scripture, and how those places do suit, and fortifie each other, which to them seemed to contradict each other, therefore they think that no one else can see it; no not God himself. They are like an ignorant fellow in a Watch-makers shop, that thinks no body can set all the loose peeces together, and make a Watch of them, because he cannot. When he hath tryed many ways, and cannot hit it, he casts all by, and concludeth, that its impossible.

And upon this account many cast away particular *truths*, though they will not cast away all. Some cannot reconcile the efficiency of the Spirit, with that of the Word; in the Conversion and Confirmation of sinners; and therefore some exclude one, and some the other, or own but the empty names; some cannot reconcile the Law, and the Gospel: And too great a part of the Teachers, in the Christian World, have been so troubled to reconcile Gods grace, with mans free-will, that of old, many did too much exclude Grace; and of late too many exclude the natural liberty of the will, upon a supposition of the inconsistency; only the names of both were still owned.

Many cannot reconcilie the sufficiency of Christs satisfaction, with the necessity of mans endeavors, and inherent righteousness; and therefore one must be straitned or denied. Many cannot reconcile common love and grace, with that which

is special and proper to the Elect; and therefore some deny one, and some another. The like might be said of many other cases, wherein the Arrogancy of mans wit hath cast out Gods truth: If both parts be never so express, yet they are upon this unbelieving questioning strain, [*How can these things be?*] How can these agree together? How can both be true? when yet its evident, that God hath owned both.

It is certain, that the Truths of Gods Word are one perfect well joynted Body; and the perfect symmetry or proportion, is much of its beauty: It is certain, that Method is an excellent help in knowing Divine things; and that no man can know Gods truths perfectly, till he see them all as in one Scheam or Body, with one view, as it were, and so sees the Location of each Truth, and the respect that it hath to all the rest; not onely to see that there is no contradiction, but how every Truth doth fortifie the rest. All this therefore is exceeding desirable, but it is not every mans lot to attain it, nor any mans in this world perfectly, or near to a perfection: It is true, that the sight of all Gods frame of the Creation, *uno intuitu*, in all its parts, with all their respects to each other, would acquaint us with abundance more of the glory of it, then by looking on the Members peace-meal we can attain: But who can see them thus, but God? at least, what mortal eye can do it? And we shall never in this life attain to see the full Body of Divine Revealed-Truths, in that method and due proportion, as is necessary to the knowledge of its full beauty.

It is a most perfectly melodious Instrument ; but every man cannot set it in tune, so as to perceive the delectable harmony.

What then ? because we cannot know all, shall we know nothing, or deny all ? Because we cannot see the whole frame of the world, in its junctures and proportion, shall we say, That there is no world, or, that the parts are not rightly situated ; or feign one to be inconsistent with the rest ? We must rather receive first, that which is most clear, and labor by degrees to see through the obscurities that beset the rest. And if we first finde from God, that both are truths, let us receive them, and learn how to reconcile them after, as we can : And if we cannot reach it, its arrogancy therefore to think that it is not to be done, and to be so highly conceited of our own understandings.

5. Another way by which this Arrogant Infidelity worketh, is this, When men will not believe any revealed Truth of God, unless they can see a possibility of accomplishing the matter by natural means. And therefore, when ever in reading the Scripture, they come to a work that passeth the power of the Creature, the Nicodemites stagger at it through unbelief, and say, [*How can these things be ?*] And the fixed Infidels with *Jeliah* deride it : When they read of the Scripture miracles ; they cannot believe them because they are miracles. Is this a likely matter, say they, that such and such things should be ? And why is it unlikely ? Because it is too hard for God ? What ! doth his Creature know his infinite

infinite power? And can you set him his bounds, and say, Thus far God can go, and no further? Thus much God can do, and no more? Is it ever the more difficult to God, because it is impossible to such as we? Will you say, That a horse cannot carry you on his back, because a flie cannot? Creatures may be compared to Creatures; but between the Creator, and the Creature, there is no comparison. Have you read how God posed Job in point of power and knowledge? (*Job* 38. 39, 40, 41.) But who is he that hath posed God? What is that work that should be difficult to him, that by his Word or Will did make all the Worlds? Are they greater works then those which he hath certainly done, that you speak of so incredulously? If you had never seen the Sun, or Moon, or Stars, or Earth, or Sea, and had meerly found it written, that God made such a World, it is like you would as doubtfully have said, [*How can these things be?*] If you had no more seen the Light or Sun, then you have seen the Angels, or Souls of men its like you would have as little believed, that there is such a thing as Light or a Sun, as you now do, that there are Angels and Immortal Souls. But I hope you are satisfied in the things you see; and may not they shame your incredulity of the things you do not see? You see there is a Sun, and Moon, and Firmament, and Earth; you know these had either a Maker and Cause, or else were eternal, and as an eternal cause to themselves. If they were eternal, or made themselves, then they are the first Being and Cause, and so are gods.

And

And is it not more reasonable to believe one God, then so many? And to believe that God is a perfect incomprehensible, superintellectual Being, then to believe, that the senseless Earth is a god? Is it not more reasonable to conclude, That this one Perfect Eternal God made all things, then that every Stone did make it self? or, That the Sun or Moon, or any Creature made it self, and the rest? If you believe, That all things are the Works of God, then you see that with your eyes that may shame your foolish dark-incredulity. Do you see a greater Work, and think it unlikely, that the same power should do a lesser? Do you see so much of the World that was made by a word, and do you ask, [*How can these things be?*] when you read of any miracle or unusual work? If it were your self, or such as you, that had been the doer of such works, you might well say, [*How can these things be?*] But God is not as man in his Works, or Word.

6. Yea, many times when men do but hear, read, or think of some Objection against the Truth of Gods revelations, which they cannot tell how to answer themselves, they presently begin to stagger at the whole Truth, and question it on every such slight occasion. If any new difficulty arise in their way, they are in the case of *Nicodemus*; saying, [*How can these things be?*] Though they have heard never so many Arguments to confirm them, and have been long receiving them, and seen an evidence of Truth in them, yet every new cavil or hard Objection doth seem to enervate all this evidence.

If



If men were as foolish and incredulous in the matters of the World, their folly would easily appear to all men: When a man hath studied Physick seven years, or twenty years, he shall meet with many new difficulties, and doubtful cases; and many old difficulties will never be overcome: And yet he will not therefore throw away all, and forsake his study or profession. Will a Student in Law give over all his study, upon every occurring difficulty, or seeming contradiction in the Laws? If any Students in the Universities should follow this example, and doubt of all that they have learned, upon every Objection which they are unable to answer, they would be but ill Proficients: Or if every Apprentice that is learning his trade, will forsake it every time that he is stalled, and at a loss, he would be long before he set up shop: On this course all men should lose all their time, lives, and labor, by doing all in vain, and undoing again, by going forward and backward, and so know nothing, nor resolve of any thing.

It is most certain, that all men are very imperfect in knowledge, and especially in the highest mysteries; and there is none so high as those in Theology, about God, and Mans Soul, and our Redemption, and our Everlasting State. And doubtless where men are so defective in knowledge, there must still be difficulties in their way, and many knots which they cannot untie. Can you expect till you are perfect in knowledge, to see the whole frame of Truth so clearly, as to be able to answer every Objection that is made  
against

against it? Why do you not lay together the evidences on both sides, and consider which of the two is the clearer case? What if you cannot answer all that is brought by the Devil and Cavillers, against the Truth? Can you answer all that Christ and his Servants say for it? I dare say you cannot, unless you take every impertinent vanity or falshood for an answer. God needs not you to be the Defenders of his Truth: He is able to vindicate it himself against all the enemies in the World? Otherwise, if he had called you chiefly to this work, he would have furnished you for it. But he first calleth you to be Schollars to learn that truth, that he may help you over all difficulties in his time and way.

We are next to shew the Causes of this unhappy distemper; why it is, or whence it comes to pass, that men are so prone to doubt of Gods Truth, upon every difficulty or myserie, that is in their way? And to question all, when they are stalled in any thing; and to deny the very things that are certain, when they are puzzled, and at a loss, but about the Manner, Cause, Reason, or Ends of them. And among others, the Causes of this great Sin, are these following.

1. Man is naturally desirous of Knowledge, and to see things in their own Evidence. And therefore, he is oft an unmannerly impatient suiter to be presently admitted into the presence Chamber of Truth, and to see her naked without delay. Nature will hardly be satisfied with believing; which is a receiving of Truth upon trust from another, no, though he give us the most convincing Arguments

Arguments of his Veracity; no, though it be God himself: Nothing will satisfie Nature, but *seeing*. If the wisest men in the World tell them, that they *see* it, or know it; if the workers of miracles, Christ and his Apostles, tell them that *they see* it; if God himself tells them that *he sees* it; yet all this doth not satisfie them, unless they may *see it themselves*. They think this is but to be kept at a distance, without door; and what may be within, they cannot tell: Every man hath an understanding of his own, and therefore would have a sight of the evidence himself; and so have a neerer knowledge of the thing, and not onely a knowledge of the Truth of the thing by the Testimony of another, how infallible soever. And therefore we are all prone, when difficulties seem great, to say with *Thomas*, [*Except I see, I will not believe.*] *John* 10.25. But [*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*] *v.* 29. How far this desire of Knowledge is in nature as from God, and how far it is in Nature, as corrupted, I will not stand to debate; but that it is in us we feel: And this is a preparative Reason of our doubting and dis-satisfaction, if not a proper cause.

2. This nature of man is yet so much more desirous to know, that though it do see things in their own proper evidence, yet is it not satisfied, unless it also see the whole, and comprehend all things with all their Reasons, Causes, and Modes. Man affecteth a certain infiniteness in knowledge; he would know all that is knowable; and so would be as God in knowing.  
And

And if he be ignorant of any part, he remaineth unsatisfied, and so is ready to quarrel with all; and like froward children that throw away their meat or cloaths, or what else they have, because they cannot have what more they would have. Every little childe will be asking you, not onely *what is this?* or, *what is that?* but also, *why is this so or so?* and, *to what use is it.* And so do men in the matters of God: And if you satisfie them not in all, they will scarce be satisfied in any thing.

Thirdly, Besides this, there is indeed a great dependance of one truth upon another; and they are (in Morality) as a well framed Building, or as a Clock or Watch, or the like Engine, where no one part can be missing without great wrong to the whole. Now when these men cannot see all, they do indeed want those helps that are necessary to the perfect seeing of any part; and then they have not the skill of making use of an imperfect knowledge, but are ready to take it for none, till they conceit it full and perfect; and thus are still detained in unbelief, and quarrelling with that which they did, or might know, because of that which they did not, or could not know.

Fourthly, Moreover, it is most certain that when God calls us at first to the knowledge of his truth, he findeth us in darkness; and though he bring us thence into a marvellous light (*Acts 26. 18. 1 Pet. 2. 9.*) yet he doth this by degrees, and not into the fullest light or measure of knowledge at the first; so that we are at the beginning but

but Babes in knowledge. It cannot be expected, that a man that was born blinde, with an indisposition of understanding to spiritual things, and that hath lived in blindness long, should presently know all things, as soon as he is converted. They do not so come to knowledge in earthly things, which they are more disposed to know, and which are nearer to them, much less in heavenly things. The *Dispositive* blindness of the best Convert, is cured but in part, much less his *actual* blindness. For (as I have said before) if a man have his eyes never so perfectly opened, who before was blinde, yet he will not see any more then is near him, within sight: If he will see other Countries, places, or persons, he must be at the pains and patience of travelling to them. And so in this case, when God hath opened the eyes of the blinde, they must yet expect to know, but by degrees: O what abundance of things are young Converts ignorant of, that are fit to be known? They are but entred into Christs School to learn; and can they think to know all the first day or year: But alas, many that are nominally entered, bring not with them the true disposition of Disciples, and therefore quarrel with their Master and his Teaching, in stead of diligent seeking after knowledge. Men have not the patience to stay at School, and wait on Christs teaching till they have got so much knowledge, as might dispel their doubts. They must be taught all at once, though they are incapable of it, and must know all presently, or in a little time, and with little pains; or else, they will not believe that Christ can teach them.

them. And so they run away from him, like foolish, impatient Schollars, because he did not bring them to more knowledge, and will not stay the time that their own ignorance doth naturally require, for so great a work.

Fifthly, And there is also much *Diligence* necessary, as well as time and patience, before men can come to so much understanding in the heavenly Mysteries, as to be able to resolve the difficulties that occur. If you stay never so long in Christs School, and yet be Truants and Loyerers, and will not take pains; no wonder if you remain ignorant. And yet these men will expect, that they should know all things, and be satisfied in the answer of every Objection, or else they will suspect the Truths of Christ. Will sitting still in Christs School, help you to learning? do you look that he should teach you, when you will not take pains to learn what he teacheth? You know in Law, in Physick, in the knowledge of any of the Sciences or Languages, no man can come to understand them, much less to defend them against all opposers, and to resolve all Objections, without so long diligence and pains taking in his Studies, as the greatness of the work requires. And shall every yong lazy Student in Theology, or every dull, unlearned Professor, think to see through all Scripture difficulties so easily? or else will he suspect the Truth which he should learn? It may be you have been Professors of Christianity long; but have you studied the Scriptures day and night, and consulted with men of judgment in such things, and diligently read the writings that



that should unfold them to you, and held on in this way, till you came to a ripeness of understanding, and ability to defend the truth against gain-sayers? If not, what wonder, if every difficulty do puzzle you, after all your unprofitable duties and profession.

6. Moreover, there is a great deal of other knowledge necessary to the through-knowing of the sence of Scriptures. Though the unlearned may know so much as is of absolute necessity to salvation, (and will save, if it be heartily believed and improved;) yet there is much learning necessary to the fuller understanding of them, and to the resolving of all doubts and difficulties that may occur. And this is not because Christ hath delighted to speak obscurely; but because our distance and imperfection, and the nature of the thing, doth make such learning to be necessary. For if Christ speak in the Syriack tongue, and if the Scriptures be written in Hebrew and Greek, (which were then fittest to divulge it;) how can it be expected, That Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, or any that understand not those Languages, should understand them so fully as those that do? For no bare Translation, though never so exact, can give us the full sence of the Original words. Besides this, all Countreys have their peculiar proverbial speeches, which are familiar with them, but would seem non-sence, or of a contrary sence to others, that were unacquainted with them: And Scripture must and doth contain such Proverbs, as were usual with those, to whom it was wrote, or the matter spoken. They had also

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many peculiar customs of their Countries, which are supposed in Scriptures which if we understand not, the plain Text will seem dark to us. The like we may say of matters of Geography, about the situation of places; and of Chronology, for the due computation of times; and of other History, to know the state of Church and Commonwealth, and many other parts of learning, which the very nature of the matter proclaimeth to be necessary for the resolving of Scripture-difficulties. Now, when unlearned men, or young raw Schollars, that want all or most of these necessities, will yet expect that they must understand all, and see through all difficulties, and be able to answer every cavi; what wonder if they be frequently stalled, and tempted to unbelief, and say, [*How can these things be?*]

If you say, That then it seems none but learned men must be able to resolve these doubts, and defend the Scriptures against opposers; and we must take all upon their words:

I answer, You must explicitly know all that is of that necessity for Salvation, and learn as much of the rest as you can: But if it be undeniable, that you do not know more, that is, enough for the resolving of the foresaid doubts; why should you be offended that we tell you so? Either you do indeed see through all difficulties, or you do not; if you do, then you are established, you are none of those that I speak of; you will not suspect the truth, nor say, [*How can these things be?*] but you are able to confute all that would seduce you. But if you do not see through these difficulties,

difficulties; should you not humbly confess it, and not quarrel with those that tell you so? And for taking it on others words, you must in reason do it, if you have no other way, and if you have reason to think that they know that which you do not know: But if you think that the learnedst men do know no more then your selves, and are as unable to resolve these doubts, as you are; you go against the full light of the whole worlds experience. Let their writings bear witness, wherein they do indeed resolve them: and do you call them to a tryal, and see whether they are able or not? and let any that understandeth the matter, and is competent, be the Judge.

7. Yea, some men are so far from having all the forementioned qualifications for knowledge, that they have not a natural strength of understanding, or capacity to conceive of difficult things; and yet they will expect that all should be made plain to them, who cannot understand a plain case in Law, Physick, or any other Profession, that they are not versed in, no, nor any great difficulties in the things that they are more conversant with.

8. Besides this, it is most certain, that when the best men have done all that they can, they will here know but in part: Perfection of knowledge is reserved for the time of our perfect blessedness; and he that knows but in part, is not like to see through every difficulty: And this imperfection joyned with the corruptions, which we shall anon mention, doth cause these suspectings of the Truth that should be entertained.

9. There are some truths also which are not well understood without experience: And it is onely Sanctification that giveth that experience. And therefore the un sanctified take them but for fancies and suspect the truth of that Word which doth assert them.

10. But one of the greatest causes of this sin, is the pride of mens heart, which makes them forget their great ignorance, shallowness, and incapacity: Men have such arrogant understandings, that be they never so empty, they think themselves immediatly capable of receiving any truth that shall be delivered to them. And if they understand not what they read or hear, they never suspect their own wit, but the writer or speaker: Because they are at age, and are now past childhood, they think they need no more to make them capable. Little know they the nature of that knowledge which they want; and how it must be attained: They know not that there is a certain order among truths; and that one presupposeth another; and all the lower are prerequisite to the higher: They know not how many hundreds of the lower preparatory truths, must be known before some of the higher can be well understood: They would go to the top of the stairs, without going up the lower steps: It would make a sober man wonder to see the impudent Pride and Arrogancy of some ignorant men; that when they have need to sit many a year at the feet of some Teacher, and humbly learn that which they know not, they will as confidently pass a present censure on the

the things that they understand not, as if they were as thoroughly acquainted with them as the best: And if they see not the evidence of a Truth, they will as confidently and scornfully call it an error, as if they were indeed most capable of judging of it: When men of true understanding do see that truth as clear as the light.

If they hear a confident Seducer, that hath a glozing tongue, and plausible cavils against a truth, these arrogant wits will presently conclude, that he is in the right, and cannot be answered; as if no body can do it, because they cannot: When, alas, men of understanding may presently discern gross ignorance, and absurdity, in that which shallow brains are so confident of. We can scarce meet with the man so grossly ignorant, but he is confident of his own understanding, and wise in his own conceit: So that when we may expect that they should say, [*What ignorant foolish wretches are we, that cannot understand the Word of God:*] They are ready to accuse or suspect the Word, and say, [*How can these things be?*]

11. And this Arrogancy is much increased by the very nature of ignorance, which is, to be even ignorant of it self. He that never saw the light knows not what light is, not what darkness is as differing from light. A dead man knows not what death is: A bruit knows not what brutishness is, because he knows not what Reason is.

There is a good measure of knowledge necessary

necessary to make some men to know their ignorance. What can shew a man his error, but the contrary truth? This is it therefore that hinders mens conviction, and makes them confident in their most false conceits; seeing they want both that Light, and that Humility which should take down their confidence. We have as much ado to make some men know, that they do not know, as to make them know, that which they know not, when once they will believe that they do not know it: Especially, if men have but any plausible, natural wit, or a little taste of learning, or a little illumination in some greater matters, which in gross ignorance they do not understand; they presently think that all things should be now plain to them. It is the ruine (or dangerous reverting, at least) of many yong zealous Professors, that formerly lived in great ignorance and ungodliness; That when God hath shewed them their error, and brought them to see the excellency of a holy life; the new Light seems so glorious to them, that they think they know all things, and need but little more: And now they are illuminated by the Spirit of God, they think they should understand all truths at the first hearing, and see through all difficulties at the first consideration: Little knowing how much lamentable ignorance doth yet remain in them; and how much more glorious a Light is yet before them; and how little they know yet, in comparison of that which they do not know: So that it is the nature of the ignorant, especially half-witted men, that have some little knowledge which may puff them up,



up, to think they have that which indeed they have not; and so to have this arrogancy of understanding, and speak against the darkness of truth, when they should lament the darkness of their own understandings; and to think the Candle is put out, or the Sun is darkned, because this Web is grown over their eyes.

12. Moreover, Infidelity is a natural, deep-rooted, obstinate sin; and therefore . . . no wonder if it be hardly overcome, and will be striving in us to the last. The first sin of man, in believing the Serpent before God, hath left a vicious habit in our nature. Man is now so estranged from God, that he is the less acquainted with his voice, and the more distrustful of him. We are so much in the dark, that we are the more diffident. When a man knows not where he is, or who is near him, he is still fearful; when he knows not what ground he stands on, whether firm, or quick sands, he is naturally apt to distrust it: An unknown God will not be well believed. Were it eassie to cure Infidelity, all other sins would be of much more easie cure. He is a conqueror indeed, that thoroughly conquers his unbelief. But the most are captivated by it to their perdition.

13. And it somewat addeth to this disease, That man is conscious of deceitfulness in himself, and from thence is apt to suspect all others. Because he findes himself both fallible and fallacious, he is ready to think that God himself is so too: For corrupt man is prone to question, whe her there be any higher vertue, then he hath experience of in himself.

14. Also it is a great occasion of this sin of Infidelity and Arrogancy, and questioning all that men do not understand, that they know not the true nature of the Christian State and Life, and build not in the order that Christ hath prescribed them. Christs method is this, That they should first understand and believe those Essentials of Christianity, without which there is no Salvation; and then engage themselves to learn of him as his Disciples; and so to see themselves to School to him, and live under his teaching, that they may know by degrees, the rest of his will. And his teaching is joyntly by his Word, Ministers, and Spirit. Men must first lay the Foundation in an explicate faith, and hold to those Fundamentals as of infallible certainty, and not expect to know the rest in a moment, nor without much diligence and patience, but wait on Christ in the Condition of Disciples, to learn all the rest. All this is expressed in Christs Commission to his Apostles, *Matth.* 28. 19. 20. 21. Where he first bids them disciple the Nations (which contains the convincing them (at age) of the fundamentals, and procuring their consent, and then to baptize them, that they may be solemnly engaged; and then teach them to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them; and this must be the work of all their lives.

Now here are two gross Errors, contrary to this stablished order of Christ, which Professors do oft run into, to their own perdition. The one is, when they do not first lay the Fundamentals as certainties, but hold them loosely, and are ready

on all occasions to reduce them to doubtful and uncertain points; or to question them, though their evidence be never so full, because of some defect of evidence in other points.

A most foolish and perverse course, which will hinder any man that useth it, from the true understanding of any Science in the World. For in all Sciences there are some undoubted Principles which must be first laid, and it must not be expected, that all points else should be of equal necessity or evidence as they: But if we should meet with never so much doubtfulness in any of the superstructure, yet these principles must still be held fast. For he that will be still plucking up his Foundation, upon every error in the building, is never like to perfect his work.

The second common Error, is, That as Professors do not lay the Foundation as certain, so they do not unfeignedly set themselves in the true posture of Disciples or Schollars to learn the rest, but think themselves past Schollars when they have gone to School, and engaged themselves to Christ, their Teacher. This is the undoing of the greatest part of the visible Church.

If they come to the Congregation, it is not as Schollars to School, but as Judges to pass sentence of the Doctrine of their Teachers, before they understand it: And if they read the Scripture, it is in the same sort. When they are at a loss, through any occurrent difficulty, they do not go to their Teachers

as humble Schollars, to learn the true sense of the Word, and the solution of their doubts: But they go as confident censurers, and as boys that will go to School to dispute with their Master, and not to learn; and therefore, no wonder if they turn self-conceited Hereticks or Infidels: For Christ hath resolved, that the most learned and worldly-wise, if they will come to School to him as his Disciples, must come as little Children: conscious of their ignorance, and humble enough to submit to his Instructions, and not proudly conceited, that they are wise enough already: And they must wait upon his Teaching year after year, and not think, that they are capable of a present understanding of each revealed Truth.

15. Lastly, Besides all the former causes of this Sin, some men are judicially deserted, and left to the power of their Arrogancy and Infidelity. When God hath shewed men the light of Fundamental verities, and instead of hearty entertaining and obeying them, they will imprison them in unrighteousness, and receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved: God oft gives them over to believe a lie, and to reject that Truth which would have saved them, if they had received it.

I have noted many Professors that have lived in pride, flesh-pleasing, or secret filchiness, or unrighteousness, or worldliness, and would not see, nor forsake their sin, but hold on in their profession, and their lusts together; that these are most commonly given over to gross Heresies, or Infidelity: For when they are once captivated

to their fleshly lust, and interest, and yet read and know the damnableness of such a state, they have no way left to quiet the r Conscience, but either to believe that Scripture is false (and then they need not fear its threatnings,) or else to leave their sins with confession and contrition; which their carnal hearts and interest will not permit.

From what hath been said already in the open- Use.  
ing of this point, we may see what a corrupt and froward heart is in man, as to the matters of God, and his own Salvation: Three notable corruptions are together comprehended in the distemper which we have here described, and expressed in the common incredulous questioning, [*How can these things be?*]

First, You may hear in this question, the voice of Ignorance. Men have lost the true knowledge of God, and of his works especially in spirituals. *The natural man discerneth them not; for they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 2. 14.* We are as blind men groping in the dark, at a loss upon every difficulty that occurs. Evidence or truth is no evidence to us, because our understandings are unprepared to receive it, and be shut against it. When we should love the Truth, we cannot finde it; when we should glorifie the God of Truth, we know him not, but in our hearts say as *Pilate, What is Truth?* And as *Pharaoh, Who is the Lord?* We are grown strangers to the way that we should go home in; and strangers to the voice that should tell us the way, and to the hand that should guide us in it; and strangers to the  
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everlasting home that we should go to. So that instead of a chearful following our Guide, we are crying out at every turning, [*How can these things be?*]

2. And here is comprehended and manifested also, the *perverse*ness of mans understanding; that will needs begin at the wrong end of his Book, and read backwards: And when he should be first inquiring, [*Whether these things be so, or not?*] He will needs be first resolved, [*How they can be so?*] And he will not believe, that *they can be so*, till he knows, *how they can be so*. Whereas common reason would teach us in other things to know first, *Whether it be so or no*, before we come to the *How can it be so*. We may easily be certain of the Being of a thousand things, when we cannot be certain, *How they be*.

3. And lastly, here is manifested also the un-reverent Arrogancy of man, that will presume to call his Maker to account, and to know of him the Reasons of his works, and *how they can be*, before he will believe them; and so he will needs question the very power of God. For to say, *How can it be?* is as much as to say, *How can God do it?* As if we were fit Judges of his ways, and able to comprehend his infinite power, and the several paths of his unsearchable counsels. *He is great in counsel, and mighty in work*, Jer. 32. 19. *He made the Heaven, and the Earth by his great power, and nothing is too hard for him*, Vers. 17. The Prophet *Isaiah's* answer should suffice to all such incredulous questions, *Isai. 28.*



9. *This cometh from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

Hence also we see what unteachable Schollars Christ hath in his School, and consequently, how patient, and gracious a Master he is. When we should be submissively enquiring, we are incredulously disputing; and we will needs be wiser than our Master, and question, whether he teach us right or wrong. It is a wonder of mercy, that he should pardon so great dulness, and unprofitableness in us; and shall we after this be so insensible of that sin of ours, and of that grace of his, as to fall a questioning him, and his truth, and lay the blame on him from our selves?

*Object. But we must not believe all things; and therefore we must enquire, and try the spirits, whether they be of God, or not, even the Spirit of Christ himself?*

*Ans.* The Spirit of Christ fears not a just tryal: Had not Christ brought sufficient evidence of his truth, he would not have condemned the unbelieving world for not receiving it. I have shewed you already how fully he hath sealed his Testament, and with what attestations he hath delivered his Doctrine to the world. But why do you not acquiesce in these confirmed verities? when once Christ hath given sufficient proof of his Doctrine, must it be questioned again, because it is wonderful? and because, that the manner of it is beyond your reach? Inquire first, whether it be a Revelation from God, or not:  
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and if it had no divine attestation, or evidence that it is of God, then you might reject it without sin or danger, when you finde it to contain things so far beyond your reach: But when God hath put his Seal to it, and proved it to be his own; if after this you will be questioning it, because of the seeming contradictions or improbabilities, you do but question the wisdom and power of the Lord: As if he had no more wisdom, then you can reach and fathom; yea, then you can censure and reprove? Or, as if he could do no more, then you can see the way and reason of, and are fit to take an account of.

I do therefore exhort all that fear the Great Name of God, and love their own Souls, That they take special heed against this dangerous sin: Think not the Proved-Sealed-Word of God, is ever the more to be suspected, because that the matters in it do seem strange, and unlikely to your Reason. And think not that you should comprehend the mysterious counsels and ways of God. Let your understandings meditate on Scripture-difficulties, that you may learn to resolve them; but suffer not the apprehension of those difficulties to make you once question the Truth of God; but abhor such a thought as soon as it arises, and cast it with detestation out of your hearts.

To perswade you the more effectually; I beseech you do but weigh impartially, besides what is said before, these following considerations.

1. Consider, who that God is whose ways thou dost so presumptuously pass thy censure of, and

whole

whose Word thou callest to the Bar of thy Judgment: Is Infinite wisdom fit to be examined by thee? or the Works of Infinite power to be tryed by thee? If there were nothing wonderful in his Word or Works, they would not believe the Majesty of God; nor the Saviour of the World, whose Name is *Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God* *Isai. 9. 6.* Gods Name must be written upon his Word and Works, and all must bear some part of his Image; and therefore have somewhat in them that is incomprehensible. Shall the Infinite God have no Word or Work, but what may be comprehended by such as we? I seriously profess, that it oft amazes me, to think that we should know so much of God, his Will, and Ways, as we do? When I consider the infinite distance between him and us, I must admire that we are made so much acquainted with his minde, and that he hath told us so much of his mysteries as he hath done, and must say [*What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou visitest and regardest him.*] *Psal 8. 4. Job 7. 17.* When I consider how little a poor Worm, or Bird, or Beast, knows of me that am made of the same flesh with him; and how much man knows of the minde of God, who is infinitely distant from him, it makes me admire at the Providence that hath so ordered it. If a Beast could so far consider, and discoufer, would it not be folly in him to call my writings, words, and ways, to the Bar, and to suspect those as false that are beyond his reach? and to say. [*How can these things be?*] Why, alas, they are ten thousand thou-

thousand times neerer to us, then we are unto God. O then let us thankfully open his books and look upon his words and works, and bless him that hath condescended so far to man, and lifted up man so neer to himself in knowledge, in comparison of other inferior creatures; and make much of that measure of knowledge which we have: But do not think to measure the Creation of God, nor to comprehend his secrets; much less himself. Methinks the reading of those four Chapters in *Job* before cited, containing Gods expostulation with him, might do much to humble an Arrogant wit, and to make it submit to infinite wisdom. Alas, the very Angels cannot comprehend God, and whether any Creature can immediately see his Essence, we cannot now affirm: Admirations do better beseech the highest of his Creatures, then bold expostulations. The flaming Mount might not be touched. You cannot endure to gaze upon the Sun, which is Gods Creature: should you approach too near it, you would be consumed by its heat. And dare you be so bold with the highest Majesty? It were not greater folly to imagine that you can span the Earth in your hand, or that you can reach the Sun with your finger, then to imagine that you are meet to expostulate with God. and that all must be unreasonable in his Word or Works, where your wit is not able to discern the Reason. Surely, [*His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways; but as far as the Heaven is above the Earth, so far are his thoughts and ways above ours, Isai. 55. 7, 8, 9*]

And

And as you cannot comprehend the thoughts and ways of God, so you are surely unfit to contradict them. The childe will submit to the wisdom of his Father, and the Schollar of his Master, and will believe them when they cannot reach the reason of their sayings: They will not set their wits against them, though they be reasonable Creatures, as well as they. It was the humble expression of men of old, when they would condemn themselves, in comparison of their superiors, to call themselves [*A dead dog*] or [*a flea*], 1 Sam 24. 14. and 26. 20. David himself doth so to *Saul*. What may we then call ourselves, in comparison with the Lord, but even nothing and less than nothing, and lighter than vanity? and should nothing contend with immensity and Eternity? Should a Flea dispute with a Learned man and say [*How can these things be*] How much less should we so dispute with God?

If a man do but look up to the height of the visible Heaven, or look down into some exceeding depth, it will make him be ready to tremble: with what dread and submissive reverence then should our mindes look to the height and depth of the Counsels of the Lord? Dare not therefore any more to quarrel with his wisdom, but say as *Job* when God had non-plus't him, *Job* 42. 2, 3. [*I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee, who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I know not.*]

2. Consider also what we are our selves, as well

as what that God is with whom we do expostulate. The Lord knows we are silly Creatures for such an undertaking ! Can such breathing lumps of earth, such walking dust, such bags of filth, be fit to enter a dispute with God? And though they are noble souls that are thus meanly housed, yet never endowed or fitted for such a task. A spoon or shell may as well contain the whole Ocean, as our narrow understandings comprehend the counsels of God. Are our understandings infinite, that we should think to comprehend the Reasons of the words and ways of the Lord, any further than he hath condescended to reveal them? Our eyes may as well expect an unlimited vision, and think to see beyond the Sun, as our understandings expect such a boundless intellection. It's a wonder that so much knowledge as we have, should be found in a soul that's housed in clay: and shall we presume that we have so much more than we have? It was the sinful Arrogancy of our first parents to desire to be as Gods in Knowledge: and shall we go so far beyond them in our Arrogancy, as to *presume* that we are *actually* such indeed?

And its observable what contradictions there be among sinful principles, and how proud infidelity doth condemn it self: These unbelievers have such low thoughts of mans soul, that they think it doth but gradually differ in its rational power from the soul of a brute; and therefore think it cannot be immortal: and yet the very same men that think not the soul so noble as to be immortal, do think it so capable of disputing with God, and comprehending the reasons of his Truths and ways, that

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they are ready to deny the most confirmed Truth, if they do not reach the maner and Ends and Reasons of it, and God shall not be believed, unless their Reasons be satisfyed in all these, and unless they are able to take so full a view of the whole body of Truth, as to answer all gain-sayers, and reconcile all seeming contradictions, they will not take Gods word to be his word, Yea with the wretched Atheist God shall not be God, because he cannot comprehend him: He shall not be infinite, in Immensity and Eternity, because that he cannot comprehend this Immensity and Eternity. And so with the Infidel, Christ shall be no Christ, and the Trinity no Trinity, because his shallow brain cannot comprehend the mysteries of the incarnation, the Hypostatical Union and the Trinity. So that the same man will have his soul to be but as the soul of a dog for kind, and yet will have it more comprehensive then the very Angels in Heaven, and think it so competent a Judge of Gods Counsels, that he will presume to condemn them, if he see not the Reasons of them.

3. Consider, Doth not certain experience tell you that you are utterly unable fully to understand the nature and reasons of those works of God, that are daily visible before your eyes? I will not say, onely of the greater and more distant, but even of the least, or of any one of them. I am confident that there is not the least flie or worm or pile of grass (much more the Sun and other Planets) but that which we know of them, is much less then that which no man knows. And should such poor understandings then be so Arrogant as to think to fathom the Counsels of God, and re-

reject his plain revealed Truths, because they see not, *How such things can be.*

4. Consider, What a stream of experience do you sin against in this Arrogancy. Doth not every Study that you fall upon, and every days business that you are engaged in, most plainly discover the weakness of your understandings? Why else do you learn no faster, and know no more? Why are you not yet absolute masters in all Sciences and Arts? Yea why are you so defective in all? And yet will you presume to dispute with God, and reject his Truths as unreasonable, after all this experience of your own infirmity, and of your unfitness for works that are so much lower?

5. Consider, Whether by this sinful Arrogancy you do not equal your understandings with God? For if you must be able to see the Reason of all his Truths and ways, and will control them because you see not the reason of them, doth not this imply that you suppose your self to equal him in understanding? And what greater madness can you be guilty of, then such a conceit? So also when you quarrel with the word as if it contained things that are unrighteous, and strengthen your unbelief by such conceits, what do you but say, that you are more righteous then God? Oh think not that the foolishness of man is wiser then God, or that our darkness is comparable to his incomprehensible light, or our unrighteousness to his perfect Justice; or that we are fit Judges of these his perfections. Hear that voice that *Eliabaz* heard, from the Spirit that passed before him in the Visions of the night, *Job* 4. 13, 14, 15,

16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. [*Shall mortal man be more just then God? Shall a man be more pure then his Maker? Behold he put no trust in his servants, and his Angels be charged with folly: how much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth: They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it: doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.*]

6. Consider further, that it is the very nature of Faith to believe the thing revealed or testified, upon the meer credit of the testifier or revealer, If therefore you will have no such implicate belief in God, you will have no faith at all. To see a thing in its own Evidence, is not to Believe. The formal object of faith is the veracity of God: Reason assures us first that God cannot lye: and next it discerneth by evidence, that [*This is Gods word, or a Divine Revelation*]: and then we may well build upon this foundation, that each particular of this Revelation is true. So that it is no true Belief, if the credit of the Testifier be not the reason of your Assent. If therefore you must see the reason of Gods revealed truths, and the very manner and end of all his works, before you will believe, this is as much as openly to proclaim, that you will be no believers at all. You will Assent to the words of the falsest Lyar, as long as you see the Evidence of truth in the things themselves which they report: And will you give no more credit to God then to such a one? Will you believe God no further then you see a Cogent Evi-

dence in the thing asserted, which shews that he cannot deceive you therein if he would? Why, thus far you will believe the worst of men: For indeed this is no believing at all. If you do not first believe that God cannot lye, and so that all that he saith is true, you have no belief in him at all.

7. If you are Christians, you are Christs Disciples, and therefore must wait on him in the humble posture of learners. And he that will no whit credit this teacher, is not like to learn. If you will not believe him, but assent onely to that which is evident of it self without his word, then how are you his Scholars?

8. Will you allow your own children or Scholars to do so by you? If they should dispute with you instead of believing you, and so should reject all that you tell them as false, that is beyond their capacity as to the reasons and manner; you would not think that they did their duty. When a school-master is teaching his scholars their lesson, shall they instead of learning, dispute it with their master, and in every difficulty or seeming contradiction, unbelievingly say, [*How can these things be*]? Be not guilty of that towards God, which you would not have a child be guilty of to a man.

9. Consider also, if this course be taken, whether ever you be like to come to knowledge. For the knowledge of things whose Evidence is all in the Revelation, and the credit of the Testifyer, can be no other way attained but by believing. All things seem strange and difficult at first, to those  
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that have not learned them. If you understand all things already, what need you to learn any more? If you do not, then all that you understand will appear to you at first as darkness or contradiction. If now you will be so confident of your own understandings, as to cast away all that you understand not already, because it seems contradictory or unlikely, how are you like to know any more? If you will conclude that all is false which you understand not already, you are like to make but unprofitable scholars. Well therefore saith Solomon, *Prov. 6. 12.* [*Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool then of him.*] For certainly it is a double degree of folly, for a man not onely to be ignorant of the things of God, but also to be so ignorant of his own ignorance. And we must be at more pains to make such proud men know that they do not know, then to make the humble to know the truths themselves, which they perceive that they yet know not. And therefore Paul doth not only bid us [*Be not wise in your own conceits*] *Rom. 12. 16* But also, intimates that ignorance is the cause of such conceits of wisdom, *Rom. 11. 25.* [*For I would not brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits.*] As Solomon saith of the foolish sluggard, that [*He is wiser in his own conceit then seven men that can render a reason*] *Pro. 26. 16.*

10. Consider, Whether in this case you joyn not impudency and inhumane ingratitude to your Arrogancy? When Christ condescendeth to become your teacher, and you are loyterers and

dullards and will not learn, but have lost the most of your time in his schoole, is it not a great mercy now, that he will yet entertain you and instruct you, and doth not turn you out of his schoole? And will you, instead of being thankful for this mercy, fall a quarrelling with his truth, and take on you to be wiser then he, when you have so provoked him by your ignorance and unprofitableness! Will you flye in his face, with audacious unbelieving questions, and say [*How can these things be.*] As if it were he that knew not what he said, and not you that did not understand him?

II. Consider, How easily can God evince the verity of those passages which you so confidently reject, and open your eyes to see that as plain as the high-way, which now seems to you so contradictory or improbable? And then what will you have to say for your unbelief and Arrogancy, but to confels your folly and sit down in shame? You know when any difficult case is propounded to you in any other matter, which you can see no probable way to resolve, yet when another hath resolved it to your hands in a few words, it is presently all plain to you, and you wonder that you could not see it before. You are as one that wearyeth himself with studying to unfold a Riddle, and when he hath given it over as impossible, another openeth it to him in a word. Or as I have seen boys at play with a pair of tarrying Irons, when one hath spent many hours in trying to undo them, and casts them away, as if it could not be done, another



ther presently and easily opens them before his face. So when you have puzzled your brains in searching out the reasons of Gods ways, and seeking to reconcile the seeming contradictions of his word, and \* say [*How can these things be*] in a moment can God shew you how they can be, and make all plain to you, and make you even wonder that you saw it not sooner, and ashamed that you opened your mouth in unbelief. How plain is that to a man of knowledge, which to the ignorant seems impossible? If the certain event did not convince them, you should never perswade the ignorant vulgar, that learned men know so much of the motions of the Planets, and can so long before tell the Eclipse of Sun or Moon, to a Minute. But when they see it come to pass, they are convinced. Thus can God convince thee of the verity of his word, either by a merciful illumination, or by a terrible execution. For there is not a soul in Hell but doth believe the truth of the threatnings of God. And the Devils themselves Believe, that would draw thee to unbelief.

12. Lastly, Take heed of the very beginnings of this sin; for it is the ordinary way to total Apostasy; when men have once so far lost their humility and modesty, and forgot that they are men, or what a man is, as to make their shallow Reason the censurer of Gods Word, because of certain seeming improbabilities; and when they will not rest satisfied in the bare Word of God, that  
thus

thus it is ; but they must needs know [*why, and how it can be*], this opens the flood-gate of temptations upon them ; for the envious Serpent will quickly shew them more difficulties then their shallow brains can answer ; and will cull out all those passages of Scripture , which are *hard to be understood , which the unlearned and unstable do wrest to their own destruction*, 2Pet. 3:18. He will shew them all the knots , but never shew them how to untie them. Such arrogant questioners & censurers of Gods word, do oft run on to utter infidelity ; while they are incompetent Judges, and do not know it , what can be expected from them but a false judgement ? For though the light shineth in darkness , yet the darkness comprehendeth it not : *Joh 1. 5.* and therefore presumeth to condemn the light.

O therefore let all young , raw students , and unsettled wits take heed in the fear of God , that they exalt not themselves, and that they think not their weak understandings to be capable of comprehending the counsels of God , and passing a censure upon his word, upon the nature of the matter as appearing unto them. Nay let the sharpest wits, and greatest scholars stoop down before the wisdom of God, and behave themselves as humble learners , and enter as little children into his schoole and Kingdom, and submissively put their mouths in the dust , and take heed of setting their wits against heaven , or challenging the infinite wisdom to a disputation. If they love themselves, let them take this advice, and remember that God delighteth to scatter the proud in the imagination of

of their own hearts, *Luke 1.51.* and to pull down  
 inspiring sinners to the dust. As they that would  
 set their power against God, would soon be con-  
 vinced of their madness by their ruine; so they  
 that will set their wisdom against him, are like to  
 escape no better. [*Let no man deceive himself: if  
 any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world;  
 let him become a fool, that he may be wise: for the  
 wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: For  
 it is written, he taketh the wise in their own crafti-  
 ness: And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts  
 of the wise that they are vain*] *1 Cor. 3. 18, 19, 20.*

Object. But would you not have men satisfied  
 of the reasonableness of what they believe? shall  
 men believe that which is unreasonable? this were  
 to make us mad, and not Christians.

Ans. You must believe nothing but what you  
 have sufficient reason to believe. But then you  
 must know what is sufficient reason for Belief.  
 Prove but the thing to be the Testimony of God,  
 and then you have sufficient reason to believe it,  
 whatsoever it be. For Faith proceedeth by this  
 Argumentation [*whatsoever God testifyeth is  
 True: But this God testifyeth; Therefore it is  
 true.*] You have as good reason to believe the  
 Major, as that there is a God: and he that acknow-  
 ledgeth not a God, is unworthy to be a man:  
 All that you have to look after therefore is to  
 prove the Minor, that [*this or that is the word  
 of God*] And as concerning the Scripture in ge-  
 neral, it carryeth sufficient Reason to warrant  
 and oblige any man that readeth or heareth it,  
 to believe it, in the forehead of it. It shineth by  
 its

It shineth by its own light, and it beareth the certain seal of Heaven. So that we have good Reason to believe the Scripture, or Doctrine of Christ to be the word of God: And then we have as good reason to believe it, and every part of it to be true. And then what ground is there for any further exceptions or objections? When you have seen the seal of God affixed, and perceived sufficient evidence of the verity of the whole, what room is left for cavils against any part of it?

*Object. But it is certain that God never spoke contradictions. Therefore if I finde contradictions in the Scriptures, may I not rationally argue that they are not the Word of God?*

*Ans.* Yes, if you could certainly and infallibly prove your Minor, that Scripture hath such contradictions. But that's not a thing that a sober man can be confident of proving: because all things that men understand not, may seem to them to have contradictions. And you have far more reason to suspect your own shallow understanding, then the Word. For those things as I have shewed, may be easily reconcileable by others that understand, which seem most unreconcilable to you. Are you sure there can be no way of reconciliation, but you must know it? It's easie therefore to see that your Minor cannot possibly be proved.

Yea it may be easily and certainly disproved, even by him that cannot reconcile those seeming contradictions: For [God attesteth no contradictions: but God attesteth the holy Scripture. Therefore

h the *fore the holy Scriptures have no contradictions.]*  
 good The Major is most evident to the light of  
 ine nature, and granted by your selfe. The Minor  
 e has is proved at large, before and elsewhere. Gods  
 of attestation is discernable to Reason.

For a It is therefore a preposterous course to begin  
 n you at the quality of the word, and to argue thence,  
 eived that God revealed it not, when you should begin  
 whole at the Attestation or seal of God, and argue  
 part thence that he did reveal it: (and indeed the ve-  
 ry quality beareth or containeth his Image and  
 spoke Seal.) For you are more capable of discerning  
 zions the seal of God attesting it (in the spirit of Mi-  
 tbat racles, and Holiness, &c.) then you are of discern-  
 in. ing presently the sense of all those passages that  
 nath seem contradictory to you. You may easily be  
 hat ignorant of the true interpretation, for want of  
 use acquaintance with some one of those many  
 a to things that are necessary thereto: But I can be  
 far certain that God hath attested the Scripture to  
 be his Word.

And indeed common reason tells us that we must  
 first have a general proof that Scripture is Gods  
 word, and argue thence to the verity of the parts,  
 & not begin with a particular proof of each part:  
 It seems you would argue thus: [*This and that*  
*text of Scripture are true: therefore they are Gods*  
*word*] but reason telleth you, you should argue  
 thus [*This is Gods word: therefore it is true*] If you  
 set a boy at school to learn his Grammar, will you  
 allow him to be so foolish, as to stay till he can  
 reconcile every seeming contradiction in it, be-  
 fore he believe it to be a Grammar, or submit  
 to

to learn, and use its Rules? Or will you not pre-  
 sume, that he first know it to be a Grammar, and  
 then make it his business to learn to understand  
 it, and therein to learn to reconcile all seeming  
 contradictions? And should he not in modesty  
 and reason, think that his Master can reconcile  
 that which may seem unreconcilable to him, as  
 such unlearned Novices, as he is?

For my part I am fully resolved, That if  
 Reason could reach to none of the matters re-  
 vealed in Scriptures, so as to see them in the evi-  
 dence of the thing, yet if I once see the evidence  
 of Divine Revelation, I may well be assured, that  
 it is wholly true; how far soever it may transcend  
 my Reason. For I have Reason to believe all that  
 God revealeth and asserteth; and I have reason  
 to acknowledge the imbecillity of my Reason  
 and its incompetency to censure the Wisdom of  
 God.

And thus I abhor both the doctrine of them  
 that say, We have no Reason to be Christians;  
 and that the truth of Scripture is an indemonstra-  
 ble principle, that must be believed without Rea-  
 sons, and not proved by them: And also the Ar-  
 rogant infidelity of them that will believe no  
 thing to be a Divine Revelation, unless their Rea-  
 son can comprehend the thing it self, or at least  
 if there be any thing in it that seems contradi-  
 ctory to their Reason; and so will begin at the  
 wrong end, and examine the particular matters,  
 by the test of their blinde Reason, when they  
 should first examine the attestations of the  
 whole, where the evidences are more fitted

for



for the Reason, even of the yonger Christians to discern.

I easily confess that no man should ground-  
 edly believe any thing to be a Divine Testimony,  
 or believe any man that saith, he speaks from  
 God: But when God hath given them sufficient  
 Reason to believe, that the Testimony and Reve-  
 lation is indeed from himself, if after that men  
 will still be doubting, because their Reason is  
 stalled about the Manner, and the Causes, and  
 Ends, and will believe no more then is within  
 the reach of their Reason in these respects, nor  
 confess that it is Gods Word, unless they can  
 vindicate it from all Objections, and know *why*  
 and *how* it is, as well as *that* it is; this is a meer  
 unreasonable unbelief. It is ordinary with Princes  
 and other Law-givers, in wisdom to conceal the  
 Reason of their Laws: Shall Subjects therefore  
 presume to censure them as defective in Wisdom  
 or Justice, because that they know not the Rea-  
 son of them? I say again, If there were nothing  
 in Scripture, but what the Reason of man could  
 comprehend, it were not so like to be the product  
 of the infinite Wisdom of God. Let Reason  
 therefore stoop to the Wisdom of our Maker,  
 and when he hath, let us know that it is he that  
 speaketh; let us humbly learn, and not proudly  
 expostulate with him about the rest.

Though I shall not undertake to set upon  
 the resolution of all the Questions of incred-  
 ulous men, which they commonly raise against the  
 Word of God; (for that would take up many  
 large Volumns of it self;) yet as I have dissuaded  
 them

them from this Arrogancy of wit, so I shall make tryal of a few of their commonest and greatest Objections, to shew them that their Infidelity is capable of a Confutation, as well as of a Dehortation.

*Object. 1.* You tell us out of Scripture, that there are Devils, most wicked malicious spirits addicted to do evil: Who made these Devils, or, how came they to be so bad: Certainly, God is good, and therefore made nothing but what was good; and every thing must have a first cause: If they made themselves evil, then they were the first cause of their own evil: And then you desire the Will of the Devil in making it to be absolutely a first cause. If you say as some, That sin is but a privation, and therefore hath no efficient cause, but a deficient, then either that deficiency must be first from God (and then he should be the first cause of all sin) or from the will of the Devil; and then either he was before bound non-deficere, or not. If not, it was no sin; if he were, then first, he could primo deficere, though God did all that belonged to him to prevent it; secondly, and he could have stood without any more help than he had when he fell, and *quoad determinationem propriæ voluntatis* should have been the first determining cause of his own perseverance, or non-deficiency: For if he could not stand, it was no sin to fall, being before innocent. Moreover, their sin was not a meer privation, but materially an act (whether velle or nolle) and formally a relation of disconformity to the Law.

*Ans. 1:* The Devil himself was the first cause

cause of his own pravity. God made him not evil, but he made himself so. God gave him free-will to be a self-determining principle; by this he was enabled to stand or fall, and left in the hands of his own counsel. By a sinful act he averted himself from the chiefest good, and became disposed to a further aversion, which might quickly habituate him to all evil. Nor is it any deifying of the Creatures will, to say it is such a self-determining principle, and so far a first cause, while it had the power of self-determination from God, and so absolutely is no first cause. It was the excellency of the Creature, as being to be governed, to have free-will, or a self-determining power to good or evil: Though it be a higher perfection to be determined or determinable onely to good, which in *Patriâ* may be enjoyed, yet in *viâ* for one under Government in the use of means in order to the end, it is most suitable to their condition to have a liberty of self-determination: And therefore this was part of the beauty of the frame of Nature, and therefore not derogatory from the workman. As God intended sapientially; or *per potentiam sapientie*, to govern the rational Creature by Laws and Objects: So did he sapientially frame him in a capacity for such a sapiential Government; and that was by giving him a free, that is, a self-determining will.

Indeed, the Angelical Nature, and Soul of Man, is so exquisite and subtile, and sublime a being, that no man can exactly perceive and comprehend the manner of its self-determination: but the thing it self is not to be doubted of,

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though the manner of it be yet past our reach. We may certainly conclude, therefore, That God made Angels and Men good; but some of those Angels, and Men, by their inducement, made themselves evil: For God made them free Agents to determine themselves to good or evil. And the ignorance of the nature of free will, doth cause such Infidels to rise up against God with their impious quarrels.

2. And see whether these blinde wretches do not wilfully put out their own eyes, and reason against most certain sense and experience. For I would ask any of them whether there be indeed any sin, or bad men in the world, or not? If they say, no; then I would wish them, not to blame any man as an evil doer, that shall rob them, or slander them, or beat them. The likeliest cure for this error, is to beat them black and blew, till they believe that he that doth it, doth ill. And why should not any man do it daily, if there be no ill in it? Is not he mad with infidelity, that thinks there is no bad man in all the world, when there are so many, and so desperately wicked, and when he is so bad himself? Or is he fit to be tolerated in any Society, that thinks there is no evil? Sure he will think, that he may do any thing, and not do evil. But if he confess, that any man is evil, or doth evil, let him ask himself who made him evil? Did God that is good? or did he himself? And if he can finde out how man came to be evil, he may finde a satisfactory answer to his question, how Angels came to be evil. But what if we could not tell how this evil did first come

come? Shall we therefore say, that there is no such thing? Shall we deny that which we see and hear, and feel, because we know not how or whence it came? What folly is this? Then let every Murderer, Thief, or other Offendor at the Assizes, come off with this Argument, and say, That he hath done no evil; for all things are of God, and God doth no evil. As mad as this reasoning is, yet have I known them that have openly professed, that they longed to see the Devil, and would ride a hundred mile to see him, in meer confidence, that there is no Devil; and that upon such vain imaginations as these.

Object. 2. *The Scripture saith, That God made all things of nothing; When of nothing, nothing can be made. How then can these things be?*

*Ans.* Cannot God do it, unless such worms can tell how he should do it? Doth the Infant know how he is formed in the Womb? But why should it seem improbable, that the first Infinite Being should create a Finite Being? He that gave all Creatures their Forms, can as well cause the first Matter. What if it were granted, That Earth, or Water, or Air, were from Eternity? Is it not as hard to make the Sun and Heavens of one of these, as to make one of these of nothing?

But methinks these Infidels should consider, That either God made all things of nothing, or else, that something of which he made them, must be eternal, and without any cause. If so, then it is God; and if God, then either the One

true God himself, or some other God. If God himself, then all Creatures should be his substance, and so be God; and so they would make every stone to be God. If any other God, then they will incur the same inconveniences; besides, the feigning of many Gods, because they will not comess the omnipotency of One. Is it not more reasonable to believe, that God made a Stone, or Earth or nothing, then to believe that it made it self? But thus will Mortals ensnare and bewilder themselves, while they will go about to comprehend and question Omnipotency, and ask their Maker, How he can so make them.

*Object. 3. Moses saith, That God made the light, and day, and darkness, and night, before the Sun: When the light is the effect, and the Sun the cause; and the darkness is but a privation of the light of the Sun. How then can these things be?*

*Ans. 1. Whatsoever God can produce mediately by the Sun, or other Instruments, that he can produce as easily, immediately himself without an Instrument. Is it not as easie to him, to cause light without a Sun, as to make the Sun it self, with its light?*

*2. Are not Philosophers yet unresolved, whether light be not a substance? And then why might it not be first created alone?*

*3. However, it might be the effect of the Element of fire, disposed of by God for differencing day and night, without a Sun, till the Sun was made. And is it not agreeable to the rest of his works, that he should first make the Elements and general matter before he form particular*

*Creature*



Creatures hereof? As he made the water, before he confin'd it in its banks, and made it a Sea: So might he make the light or fire, before he contracted so much of it into a Sun: And if he can distinguish day and night by the sun afterward, he might as easily do it by the Element of Fire or Light before. You may see a pretence of further satisfaction to Reason in this point, in *Tho. White* his Appendix, *Theol. ad Institut. Peripat.* cap. 2. & 4. which I in end not to recite.

Object 4. *Moses* saith *Gen. 1. 16. That God made two great Lights, the Sun and Moon; whereas it is certain, that many other Planets are greater than the Moon; therefore he speaketh ignorantly.*

*Ans.* But though they are greater than the Moon, they are not greater Lights to the Earth, than the Moon, which is the thing that *Moses* affirmeth.

Object. 5. *Moses* makes the Garden of Eden to have a River arising in it, which divideth it self into four parts. But there is no such place now known in the world, where four such Rivers as he describeth are so near.

*Ans.* *Moses* saith not, that this River had its rise in Eden, much less in the Garden; nor that the four divisions or branches of it were in the Garden, but in Eden. It was not all Eden that was this Garden, nor the Garden called Eden: But Eden was the name of the Country (at that time when *Moses* wrote) in which the Garden was. And this Land of Eden was in *Telassar*, that is, in the upper part of *Chaldea*, where *Babylon* is situate; and there the River *Euphrates*

divideth it self into those four streams which *Moses* here describe; which River goeth through and out of *Eden*, though the spring or Head be elsewhere: The four particular Branches you may see described by *Junius* on the Text at large; and the most probable conjecture of the situation of the Garden, is, that it was in or very near the place where *Babylon* now stands, and from whence came the Jews suffering, as well as our first sin.

Object. 6. *Is it a likely thing that a Serpent should speak to Eve? Or the subtilty of the Serpent be a reason of the Temptation? Or, that Eve that was then perfect, should not know that Serpents cannot speak of themselves; and if she knew that it was the Devil that spake by the Serpent, it would have affrighted and astonished her, rather then have been such a temptation to her?*

Ans. 1. Though *Eve* was perfect as to her natural powers, and capacity, yet not as to her actual knowledge? She that was newly then created, might be ignorant of the Serpents nature.

2. But suppose that she knew that it was the Devil that spake by the Serpent (which seems to me most likely) yet doth it not follow, that she should then dread or abhor him: For how know you that *Eve* was acquainted with the Diabolical pravity or malice? How know you when the Angels fell to be Devils? whether long before? or whether they were but newly fallen, (as *Zanchy* conceiveth by their unbelief.) But most certain it is, that they were then no such hateful or dread-

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ful Creatures in the apprehension of man, as now they are: For it was upon mans fall, that God put that enmity between them and us, from which our hatred and dread of them doth proceed. When the Devil had shewed his malice to us so far; then d d God put that fixed enmity in our natures which we all since perceive. This was not in *Eve*, and therefore it is no wonder if she had no more dread of this evil spirit, then we have of one another, especially when it is most likely that she well knew that there were good Angels, but knew not of their fall, and of their malice unto her self. And for the subtilty of the Instrumental Serpent, it was the likelier to be the Instrument of the subtil deceiver: And it is most likely, that God would not suffer Satan to use any other Instrument, that so the quality of the Instrument might be fitter to excite a due czutelousness in the woman, Satan himself being a spirit, is invisible to us; and therefore, when he will appear, it must be in some borrowed shape; and he usually fitreth that shape to the ends of his apparition: If it be to terrifie, it is commonly in a dreadful shape; and for the most part, God will not suffer him to appear in any other, that man may the better know that it is the enemy that he hath to deal with. And so before our fall, when he would deceive, he speaketh by a subtile Creature, and is permitted to do it by no other, that man might have the more reason to suspect that he came in way of deceit. We are incompetent Judges of the full of these things, unless we better knew the acquaintance that man then had with the

angelical nature, and what familiarity was between them, or what alteration is since made in the nature of the instrumental Serpent by the Curse. Why then should we unbelievingly ask, *How these things can be?* which God revealeth, when we may easily know that we are such incompetent Judges.

Many more of these Objections might be mentioned, and easily confuted, that are raised by Infidels about the Creation, and fall; but because *Junius* hath confuted 22 of them already, after his Prelections on *Gen. 3. p. 9.* against an Antinomian that then urged them from *Simplicius* the Heathen Philosopher, I shall refer them that need it thither for satisfaction.

Obj. 7. *How could Cain fly into the Land of Nod, or build a City, Gen. 4. 16, 17. when there was no more men on Earth?*

*Ans. 1.* At least It is called the Land of Nod not because it was so called in *Cains* time, but in the time when *Moses* wrote. 2. It is supposed to be between the hundred & two hundred year of his age, that *Cain* built this City, and by some, the 3, or 400. for it is not said that he did it presently after his Curse, though these things are laid close together in the concise Narration. And why might not *Cains* posterity be easily multiplied, in all that time to such a number as might build and replenish a City, yea many Cities.

Obj 8. *Is it a likely thing that the Red-Sea should be divided for the Israelites to pass through? Or that the Sun should stand still in Jothuahs time; and yet all the Creation be overturned by it? Or that Jonas should*

could live without ayre in the belly of a Whale? Or not be digested in his belly as other food is? How can these things be?

*Answer.* And what, must God do none but like-ly things? Is it not as easie with him to do all this, as for you to move a finger, and much more? Is it not as easie to make the water stand still as move; or to gather it on heaps in the Sea, as to gather it into the Sea from the rest of the earth, and to keep its course in ebbing and flowing? And is it not as easie to cause the Sun to stand still as to move? And so to move as it is supposed to do? If the Sun had used to stand still, would you not have taken it for as incredible a matter that it should move? And have said as unbelievably, *How can this be?* And for the disordering of Nature, it was Sun and Moon with all the moveable frame that stood still together; and not the Sun alone: And so made no such alteration as is imagined, it must have done.

And for *Jonas*, that God that made him and all the world, and sustaineth it by his power, could easily do this. Perhaps these Infidels will next say that an Infant cannot live in the Mothers womb for want of ayre or breath.

2. Are they not as great works which we every day see, in the Being and Course of Sun, Moon and other Creatures, as any of these?

3. Is it likely that *Moses* would have wrote of such a thing as the standing and opening of the Red Sea, and the Israelites passing through it, to those same Israelites, and that he would so oft have used that as an Argument to move them to obedience

Obedience, and deliver them his Law to be kept upon such an Obligation or Motive, if no such thing at all had been done: would so many thousand people have believed such a man that told them they were led through the red sea as on dry land? and would they have followed him forty years through a wilderness, and so zealously have maintained his Law which was backed with such Motives, if they had all known these things to be false? Or was it possible they should be false, and they not know them?

But I'll stand no more in confuting these cavils against the Old-Testament but speak to 2, or 3 which they bring against the Gospel of Christ.

Obj. 9. *Is it a likely thing that a Virgin should conceive and have a child? How can this be?*

Ans<sup>w</sup>. Is it not as easie for God to cause conception by the Holy Ghost immediately, as mediately by man? Doth God insable a Creature to do that which he cannot do himself, without that Creature? What madness were it to dream that this exceeds the power of God?

Obj. 10. *Is it a likely thing that God should become a man, or that God and man should be one person, which is more Condescension then for a Prince to become a slye to save slyes from being killed?*

Ans<sup>w</sup>. It's one thing to ask whether this be possible? and another, Whether it were done? It is indeed the greatest wonder of all the works of God, But there is no contradiction in it to prove it impossible. The Godhead was no whit really abased or changed by this Union, but (at the utmost) relatively and reputatively onely.  
God



God did not *become* man, by ceasing to be God, or commixing the humane Nature with the Divine. But one y assumed a humane nature to the Divine. It is not therefore as if a Prince should become an inferior Creature, but onely as if he should assume such a Creature into so neer a relation to him.

2. And that God hath indeed done this, his evident Testimonies have proved to the world: Is it likely or possible that one should assert such a thing, and seal it in the face of the world with Miracles, and rise himself from the dead, and send forth a spirit of Miracles and of holiness on his Church, to confirm his affirmation, if all this were not true which he affirmeth?

3 Is this the thanks that God shall have for his wonderful condescension, that though he prove it to be true, yet we will not believe the mercy that he shews us, unless it seem likely to us in the way of its accomplishment?

Obj 11. *Is it not a contradiction to say that there are three persons, and but one God?*

Ans<sup>w</sup> No: Because to be a person or subsistence in the Godhead, and to be a God is not all one. It is no contradiction that the Vegetative, Sensitive and Rational in man, should be three, and distinct one from another, and yet not be three souls but one. And that Power, Understanding, and Will, should be three, and distinct, and yet not three souls but one: And that Power, Light, and Heat, should be distinct in the Sun; and yet not be three Suns, but one. Why then should the Divine Trinity of subsistences seem a contradiction?

Object

Object. 12. *There are many contradictions in Scripture; and therefore it is incredible. For example; Mark. 14. 30. [Before the Cock Crow twice] Mat. and Luke say [Before the Cock Crow] And many the like.*

Ans. 1. It is meer ignorance of the sense of Scripture, that causeth this conceit of contradiction. Expositors themselves are imperfect in the understanding of them; yet if you will well read them, you shall see how easily and clearly they reconcile many things that seem unreconcilable to the ignorant. Read among others, *Scharpius* his *Symphonia* to that end.

2. As to the Text instanced. The second Cock Crowing was then specially and eminently called [*The Cocks Crowing*] And therefore *Matthæw* and *Luke* do name no more but [*the Crowing of the Cock*] meaning that second Cock, which was specially so called; (of which see *Grotius* on the Text) whereas *Mark* doth more precisely express the same in fuller words: What a vain mind is it that will pick quarrels with such expressions?

I give but a brief touch of these few common Exceptions, leaving them to seek the resolution of such doubts, from Commentators that have performed it, or from their judicious Teachers, who are at hand, and ready to do it.

The Lord acquaint unbelieving sinners with the greatness of their ignorance, and the shallowness of their capacities that they may know how unfit they are to expostulate with their Maker, and what need they have to wait upon him as humble Learners. For the meek will he teach his way

ay, *Psal* 25.9. and unto Babes doth he reveal  
 the Mysteries of his Will. For though the Lord  
 High, yet hath he respect unto the lowly : but  
 he proud he knoweth a far off, *Psal.* 138. 6.  
 and the mysteries of the Gospel which now seem  
 incredible, he will one day open to the comfort  
 of his Saints, and the confusion of unbelievers ;  
 when as the appearing of our Lord *Jesus Christ*,  
 which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed  
 and onely Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord  
 of Lords : who onely hath immortality, dwelling  
 in the light which no man can approach unto,  
 whom no man hath seen or can see : to whom be Ho-  
 nor and Power everlasting. Amen.

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FINIS.

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